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HOW FARMERS IN MY COUNTY PROFITED FROM THE WOOL POOL

A radio talk by E. L. Riggle, County Agent, Spencer, West Virginia, delivered in the Land Grant College radio program, May 15, 1935, and broadcast by a network of 50 associated NBC radio stations.

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Cooperative wool marketing began in Roane County, West Virginia, in the year 1929 when the sheep producers organized the Roane County Wool Association. The purpose of this organization was to improve the quality of wool and secure a fair price for their product according to the quality and grade produced. Before this no definite, organized plan of marketing of wool existed in this country. All wool was sold direct to local dealers and buyers on a flat rate basis. Hence the producer had no incentive to improve the quality of wool.

But things changed when the Roane County Wool Association was organized. In cooperation with the West Virginia Wool Association and Agricultural Extension Service of West Virginia University, our county organization formed a wool pool. All producers in the county are offered the services of the organization if they will consign their wool to the pool by the first of May of each year. After the closing date, all the fleeces in the county pool are turned over to the State Organization. The State pool offers our fleeces for sale to the highest bidder, along with the fleeces from the other county pools. The wool is sold in two classes, namely, clear medium wool and rejects. Mills and brokers are furnished the desired information as to assembly points, approximate number fleeces at these points and terms and conditions of sale. Bids are received f.o.b. shipping point, on the county pool individually, or the state pool as a whole. Sealed bids are opened by the executive committee of the State association at a designated time and place, and the successful buyer determined, after which, a schedule of assembly is worked out, and the producers are notified to deliver their wool. At assembly points the wool is weighed, graded, resacted and loaded on the car at an expense not to exceed 1¢ per pound. The expense is deducted from the sale price of the wool.

This system has been in operation for the past six years and has proved very efficient. During this period Roane County farmers marketed cooperatively 208 thousand 300 pounds of wool. Their wool brought \$50,515 gross. Each year the pool has increased the number of pounds of wool handled and has served more farmers.

In the first year 165 producers consigned some eighteen thousand pounds of wool. Last year, 372 producers consigned fifty-two thousand pounds. The wool has gradually improved in quality. In 1929 there were 19% rejects. In 1934 there were 7.2% rejects. The price paid for the wool by the brokers and mills has been entirely satisfactory each year. At the time the wool is sold the prices have been in accord with the wool markets of the United States and in many cases above the market quotations, and especially have they exceeded the local prevailing country price.

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The Roane County Wool Pool has been of great benefit to the farmers. It has improved the quality of the wool produced in the county. It has brought the wool growers larger incomes than they would otherwise have had. It has unquestionably been the price fixing factor for the territory, and has so definitely raised the price level that wool producers outside of the pool have greatly benefited from its existence. The grading demonstrations held in connection with the assembly, and the premium paid for the clear medium or good wool, has definitely caused the production of a higher quality wool. This is shown by the decrease in the percentage of rejects. It has furnished a safe and secure outlet direct to the processors or mills, for both the small and large producer, at a minimum of marketing expense, thereby returning a higher percent of the market value of wool direct to the producer. In addition it has also brought about a pronounced unity of effort among the farmers and has demonstrated the ultimate value of cooperative effort. The farmers have been well pleased with the services rendered by the County and State Wool Association in cooperation with the Agricultural Extension Service of West Virginia University and are appreciative of their efforts.

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